

Testimony before the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement

H.B. 6403 An Act Requiring Legislative Approval for the Merger or Closing of Institutions within the Connecticut State Colleges or Universities

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Dear Representative Gary A. Turco and members of the committee.

My name Carmen Yiamouyiannis and I live in West Hartford. I am a member of the 4C's union and have been a full-time Biology professor at Capital Community College for 24 years. Thank you for this opportunity today to speak with you about my concerns. H.B. 6403 asks for legislative approval for the merger or closing of institutions within the Connecticut State Colleges or Universities.

Over 1400 faculty, staff, students, and even the past presidents and chancellors signed a petition to stop the misguided "Students First" community college consolidation plan. I was Chair of the Senate two years ago when our college Senate cast a vote of no confidence in the BOR and Mark Ojakian due to our concerns of the "Students First" plan. 10 of 12 community colleges voted the same. The BOR has been remiss in not questioning and failing to investigate the numerous concerns brought up by faculty and staff.

It has been 10 years since the merger of the community colleges and the state universities. Since 2011, well over \$400 million has been spent for the system office administration. Those millions have not put teachers in classrooms, have not provided direct student services, and have not lowered the cost of tuition for students. For example, Capital offers about 25-30 lecture or lab sections of chemistry per semester with only one full-time chemist. Over the many years, we have been denied permission to replace faculty who have retired due to lack of funding. Lack of enough full-time faculty significantly affects the quality of the curriculum and negatively impacts our students.

72% of Capital's students are minority and many of our students come from some of the poorest neighborhoods in the country. The "Student's First" plan proposes to eliminate developmental non-credit Math and English classes for the very students who could use it the most! Many of our students come to Capital underprepared but with hopes and dreams to succeed and get an education that will improve their career opportunities and provide well for their family. A one-size fits all model developed by non-academic political appointees doesn't help our students. There are many ways to develop our educational institutions in Connecticut, but this is not one of them. Let the faculty and staff, who deal directly with the students, help.

I implore you to adopt H.B. 6403 and get our legislators onboard to approve proposed mergers or closings of the CT state colleges or universities.

